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ABSTRACT

We must know more about adult education, why people enroll, who they are, and what they expect; we must develop new and better techniques for serving them; and we must define the role of government. Some have proposed a National Center for Lifelong Learning, which could interpret data on adult education and serve as the instrument in developing a network of communications among adult education programs. It could work jointly with the Office of Education to develop data collection requirements. Local Lifelong Learning councils could provide opportunities for adults to join in local task-centered activities seeking solutions to community and human problems. This system might become the central ingredient in the reform of education at all levels. (se)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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THE EDUCATIONAL THIRD DIMENSION*

Address by James E. Allen, Jr.
Assistant Secretary for Education
and
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Participants in this Galaxy Conference do not have to be told that education does not stop today with a high school diploma or a college degree. Indeed, this entire meeting is dedicated to the proposition that education is a lifelong process. We all agree that after basic elementary and secondary education, followed by relatively specialized post-secondary training, we must be concerned with a third dimension--the education of adults in a continuing process which we have labelled adult education, continuing education or, as I prefer to call it, lifelong learning. As Secretary Finch said in a speech on November 20, "Continuing education ..... is an attempt to integrate education into enriched experience throughout a lifetime."

In spite of our experimentation with its process and the extent of its impact, this third dimension is still the neglected stepchild of the educational establishment. Efforts at all levels--local, State and Federal--too often are scattered, fragmented, underfunded and increasingly out of step with the times and with the people who most need its benefits.

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I ask that you who represent the national and State associations of adult educators, as well as others who serve the numerous adult education efforts of the public and private sectors, join with me and the Office of Education to give this dimension the identity and the support which it deserves. I share your desire to close the chapter headed "peripheral and secondary" and open the chapter headed "integral and central."

Those of you who know of my efforts in New York State, know that I have a strong commitment to the concept of continuing education. My convictions have heightened in the seven months I have been in Washington. We desperately need new and imaginative ideas in this important field.

We must recognize first that if we are going to do something about this third dimension in education that we must know more about it. We must have some idea why people enroll for additional learning, how many there are, who they are, and what they expect of the programs they enter. We must also have plans and support for developing techniques to serve these people better and to reach out for those currently being missed. Finally, we must define the role that Government should play and take steps to implement that role.

We are, I am sure, in agreement on the aspects of human development to be served by lifelong learning. The goal--for all as for each--is personal effectiveness, as a worker, as a member of a family, as a citizen taking part in the affairs of his community, and as an individual fulfilling private aspirations and potentialities. The means start with the establishment of fundamental literacy and go on through an almost infinite range of approaches to specialized skills and knowledge.

The National Center for Educational Statistics at the Office of Education has set out to learn about the kinds of people who participate in these programs. The Center asked the Bureau of the Census to add a number of questions to its May 1969 Current Population Survey so that it could determine how many had participated in any kind of adult education activity. It sounds like a simple and foolproof procedure, but getting the desired result in this sort of factfinding endeavor can involve complications. Testing a single question approach like one used for a similar survey in 1957, the Center learned that many persons did not report their occupational training and other activity. Apparently they did not think of the types of learning experiences that they were undergoing as "education." For many people, the activity is considered part of the job, a natural community participation effort, or just a part of everyday living.

The Center experimented further and finally went into the field with a "screen" of seven very specific questions. These questions were asked of all persons 17 years and over who were not regular full-time students in the Census sample of 50,000 families. These families provide a cross-section of the United States, and the results, when properly weighed, provide reliable estimates of what the answers would have been if the same questions had been asked all families.

The results are now in. The Center's study reveals that 13,150,000 adults <u>say</u> that they are participating in an adult education activity. We are, even now, uncertain of the accuracy of the figure. Still, over 13 million people reporting adult education participation is a significant number. It is larger than the enrollment in all post-secondary institutions. About the same number is enrolled in grades 9-12 throughout the United States.

The 13 million represents 1 person in 9, or 11 percent of all Americans age 17 or over who are not full-time students. It includes 13 percent of the white males, but only about 8 percent of non-white males. It includes about 10 percent of all females, with equal distribution between white women and those of other ethnic designations. When we consider not only the needs of a rapidly changing technology but the social imperatives of our time, these figures are less notable for being large than for being small.

Let's consider for a few minutes what we need to do with our third dimension of education. We need to know more about what lifelong learning is, what it isn't, and what it should be.

According to Peter Drucker, we are living in what he calls a "knowledge economy."

In his book, The Age of Discontinuity, Drucker reviews the startling facts that support his assertion. For example: 90 percent of all scientists and technologists who ever lived are alive and at work today ..... as many books as were published in the 500 years between Gutenberg and 1950 were published in the last 25 years ..... by 1960, knowledge workers in the various professional, managerial, and technical fields, had edged out farmers and industrial workers as the largest single occupational group in the United States.

This brings me to the point that I want to make. We need lifelong learning--that is, the repeated return of the experienced and the developed adult to the learning process so that new knowledge can continually be applied to living and working. It is increasingly accepted that all workers must be retrained periodically to keep abreast of the knowledge explosion. Experience alone has only limited value in modern work-life. Using knowledge makes change and personal growth inevitable. For knowledge by definition innovates, searches, questions, and changes.

The adult education that we have had in the past was primarily schooling for those who had been poorly educated. Prior to World War II, the working classes either took or were given the training needed to make them more efficient producers of goods and services. It was almost unheard of for highly educated persons to think of adding to an elite college degree by going back to school after graduation. But today, continuing education has become the fastest growing part of our educational system.

The time has arrived for us to think seriously of making major shifts in our educational perspective. We should not go on adding to the content of education, hoping that we can cram into the head of youth all that it needs to know by graduation time. Rather we should make life itself a part of the continuing education process. We must understand that while a youth can learn much before he arrives at adulthood, adults can sometimes learn even better after reaching maturity. Continuing education assumes that the richer the life experience, the greater the desire to learn and the capacity to accept the learning experience.

The challenge to public policy now is to create new arrangements and new opportunities for the growth and development of adults. In an era of scarce resources where there are competing claims for public support, the critical task is identifying the alternatives for action. An innovative approach to planning for adult education is needed to serve better the needs of both individuals and society.

I recognize that a great virtue of American adult education is pluralism. But pluralism, valuable as it is, means limitations of perspective and fragmentation of professional and volunteer effort. Each of the agencies and institutions involved in the educational enterprise may work in ways unrelated to each other and to total national interest.

A way must be found to bring their views together in the formulation of national policies. Limitations need to be delineated as well as goals and priorities. Interrelationships between employment, education, and social service policies should be made explicit, now that, as Robert Blakely pointed out in a recent report, continuing education is more concerned with poverty than with affluence, and with problem-solving than subject matter.

The time may be at hand for some tangible steps to be taken which pull together and unite efforts across the country in the third dimension field of continuing education. Some have proposed the establishment of a National Center for Lifelong Learning. Such a national organization may be needed to focus on continuing education as an indispensable component of America's system of education and I would welcome your ideas on this proposal. If we are to be what Thomas Jefferson called "an aristocracy of achievement growing out of a democracy of opportunity," we must develop comprehensive educational opportunity for <u>all</u> adult citizens, including those not now benefitting from your programs.

We can no longer leave to chance the growth and development of this vital sector of American life. We can no longer assume that the unplanned multiplicity of efforts will add up to the required total effort. The creation of a single national organization, with private as well as public funds, might serve better our Nation's goals in relation to adult education. The Center could provide a link between the generators of new knowledge and practitioners in the field.

A basic responsibility of such a Center could be the interpretation of data on adult education as a basis for comprehensive planning of continuing education programs and services. The Center could also serve as a reference hub for the organizations and agencies represented at this Conference in the improvement of the general effort.

The Office of Education could jointly develop with the Center for Lifelong Learning data collection requirements for adult education programs at all levels of operation. The provision of comparable data would permit the Center and program administrators to assess more accurately the effectiveness of program efforts.

The Center could be the instrument for developing a network of communications among adult education programs at all levels. In providing informational feedback to these agencies and organizations, coordination could be enhanced. It could serve as a clearinghouse of promising practices and unique program applications developed through State and local programs.

As a ready resource for organizations and institutions, the Center could advise them on the range and availability of Federal support to adult and continuing education.

With initial support, the Center could encourage the improvement of operational efficiency and the qualitative enhancement of existing facilities and services.

I realize that, because of the heterogeneous nature of programs for adults at the community level, problem-solving efforts have made little headway. Structures must be devised which make it possible for adults to join together in local task-centered activities that seek solutions to community and human problems.

The creation of local Lifelong Learning Councils would be a step in this direction. Federal funds, when they are made available, might be used to sustain the work of these Councils. The entire spectrum of community educational and cultural endeavors should be represented--public and private schools, community colleges, universities, libraries, museums, volunteer groups, public agencies, and communications media. The Council's would cooperate as mechanisms to coordinate all continuing education activities within the community, stimulate program innovation, and act as the information center for all local efforts. Properly funded and dynamically directed, the Councils could identify educational needs in the community to which appropriate resources could be applied.

The Councils would be both a contributor to and a beneficiary of the services of the National Center for Lifelong Learning. The local Council would be a vital link in the development of a national network of communications between learners and teachers and among agencies and organizations.

Such local Councils and the National Center might also help continuing education become a central ingredient in the reform of education at all levels. The structure, techniques, materials and offerings of continuing education programs can well become the "yeast" for testing new ideas and approaches for learning in general. I am convinced education dollars in the years immediately ahead are going to gravitate increasingly towards new forms of teaching and learning and that adequate dollars will not be forthcoming without such new forms which have been tested and determined to have significant promise. You could well be at the forefront of this educational reform--with which, I might add, I firmly intend to be identified as an advocate.

As you know, the Office of Education already has significant investments in continuing education. I hope to see these investments increase in the future once the current budget restraints imposed by the President's battle against inflation can safely be removed. In the meantime, I am eager to see that existing resources available under programs like the Adult Basic Education Act of 1966 and the Community Services and Continuing Education title of the Higher Education Act of 1965 are fully and effectively administered to strengthen your efforts on behalf of lifelong learning.

You may already be aware that I have reorganized the U.S. Office of Education so that all planning, research and evaluation efforts are now centralized under Deputy Assistant Secretary James Gallagher. One objective of this move and Dr. Gallagher's appointment was to assure better planning for all levels of education--including continuing education--and better coordination of available resources. Our long-range plans include establishment of a new Bureau of Continuing Education as a means of improving Office of Education support and leadership for lifelong learning. In these efforts and others, we hope to join with you in developing better understanding and backing for this third dimension of education.

Anything short of a nationwide commitment to adult and continuing education will perpetuate the status quo and the popular conception of adult education as a pleasant extra, to be underwritten if other demands on the budget permit. It is for you to knock on the doors of your school and college administrators, your governing boards, your county and State legislatures and your national government to convince Americans everywhere of the importance of continuing education for personal fulfillment in a democratic society and for economic success in a technological world.

The case for continuing education is strong. It is the hope of a second chance for the disadvantaged whom other channels of education have failed. It is a necessity for keeping the Nation's labor force abreast of its dynamic technology. It is a key to many kinds of redevelopment--personal and communal. It may be an invaluable tool of great versatility for that recasting of basic social institutions that our turbulent era demands. We at the Office of Education want to see it used to the limits of its capacities. We invite your collaboration in an endeavor large enough to call upon the best energies of all Americans; an endeavor with promise for any individual American, and for all of us as a Nation.

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